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# Medical Mission Series. 1390

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## HOSPITALS IN PERSIA.

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New Hospital, Hamadan.

The Woman's Foreign Missionary Society  
Of the Presbyterian Church,

501 Witherspoon Building, Philadelphia.

1907

# HOSPITALS IN PERSIA.



IN Persia, as in other Moslem lands, there is nothing so effective in reaching the people as medical work. Direct teaching is difficult and often dangerous, but the physician has no trouble in gaining access to homes and hearts. Persians have a great reverence for physicians, and an elaborate medical system of their own, based largely upon the old Arabic practice. Their great remedy is bleeding, which is practiced to an injurious extent in almost every sort of ailment.

The need for medical women is especially serious. Women of the upper classes are closely secluded, and it is only in extreme cases that a medical man is allowed to visit them. Among the masses, sanitary conditions are frightful, and the ignorance and superstition of the people are almost beyond belief.

The Persian Mission has been especially favored in its succession of able physicians, who have done more toward its success than all other instrumentalities combined. Dr. Asahel Grant, one of the earliest missionaries to the Nestorians (1835), was called at once to visit numerous Moslem patients. Within a week after his arrival he was able to relieve the sufferings of the governor, who showed his gratitude by giving him the valuable property still occupied by the mission at Urumia.

In 1871 the Persian Mission was transferred from the American Board to the Presbyterian Board of Foreign Missions. From 1878 to 1905 the medical work at **Urumia** was in the hands of Dr. John P. Cochran, whose distinguished career is familiar to all. Born on the mission field, and uniquely equipped for his work by training and character, he was renowned through all Western Persia, and wielded immense influence over the wild Kurdish chiefs. His death in 1905 seemed an irreparable loss. He has been succeeded by Dr. Harry P. Packard, formerly of Denver, Colorado.

The Westminster Hospital was built in 1880, and classes of young men began to be regularly trained. The Howard Annex, for women, was added ten years later, with a dispensary for women, both in charge of Dr. Emma T. Miller. The majority of hospital patients are Christians. Moslems will come to the dispensary or see the physician in their homes, but most of them feel that their chance of Paradise is forfeited by sleeping under a Christian roof and eating Christian food. During the recent border wars between Turkey and Persia a number of the wounded Persian soldiers were brought to the hospital and cared for by Dr. Packard.

When the station at **Tabriz** was opened (1873) it was again the medical work that won the favor of the authorities. The late Shah, then the Crown Prince, resident at Tabriz, placed such confidence in the skill of Dr. G. W. Holmes that he wished to appoint him court physician. Dr. W. S. Vanneman, now in charge, has a large dispensary and private practice, entirely self-supporting. He reports:

"This city has 200,000 population, with only two or three European trained physicians. We have more calls to homes than we can answer, and our dispensary must be open every day. We see the patients one by one in a private room, and thus have opportunity for religious conversation with them. We have Europeans, Moslems, Armenians and Nestorians—governors, mayors, Moslem

priests, noblemen, dervishes and lepers—the richest and the poorest. Diseases of every kind come to the dispensary, including whooping-cough, measles, scarlet fever, diphtheria and small-pox. The medical missionary has to cover the whole field of medicine.”

Several rooms have been added to the men's dispensary, so that a few in-patients can be cared for. An additional physician is urgently needed. An Armenian evangelist, who spends his mornings at the dispensary, read and talked with 1,300 men in twenty-six days.

When the Rev. Dr. Whipple left Tabriz, he gave his home to the mission as a hospital for women and children. This was opened in 1899, under the charge of Dr. Mary Bradford. It is now temporarily closed, during her absence in America on account of her mother's health. The ladies of the station visit constantly among the sick, and in a leper village near by.

The medical work in **Teheran** was inaugurated by Dr. W. W. Torrence in 1881. Teheran is a beautiful and growing city, and there is less prejudice against foreigners than elsewhere. Land for the hospital was presented by the Prime Minister, whom Dr. Torrence had cured of long-standing disease. It is in the northeastern part of the city, about two miles from the Central Mission Compound. The hospital was built in 1892, and enlarged in 1895 by gifts from citizens of Teheran. In 1893 a new dispensary was added, and during the cholera epidemic of that year more than 2,000 patients were treated. Dr. Mary Smith has charge of the women's dispensary and practices among women of the better class in their homes. There was no proper accommodation for women in the hospital and their coming there had been discouraged.

“Last year, however,” says Dr. Wishard, “the wife of a high court official was admitted, upon the insistent demand of her husband, for surgical treat-

ment. The Shah took an interest in the case, and had daily reports of her condition. By God's blessing, her health was fully restored. After this we were compelled to take several other cases and do the best we could for them. One day I had just finished a most serious operation for tumor on a poor woman, the mother of three children, when I was summoned to the mother of a nobleman near by. I went reluctantly. After I had prescribed for her, she inquired about matters at the hospital, and I frankly told her our difficulties, and the great need for a woman's ward. She at once said that if it was God's will, she would be glad to build a ward for women and children. 'Send me the plans,' she said, 'and if I am able, I will supply the funds.' It seemed strange to me that this Moslem lady, reared in seclusion, should have the blessing of giving the first hospital for women in Teheran.

"Did she supply the funds? Well, you would have thought so, if you had seen her servants coming in with the first thousand dollars, all in small coins. It seemed to me that I should never get it counted. To-day we have a neat, modern hospital for women and children, and we hope to dedicate it in October finished and free from debt.

"There is a cosy little home in connection with it for the trained nurse whom our faith tells us that we are going to have."

The nurse, Miss Flora M. Bradford, has since been sent.

**Hamadan**, the second centre of the East Persian Mission, is supposed to occupy the site of the ancient Ecbatana. Dr. G. W. Holmes spent nine years here, and through his itinerating tours and extensive practice gained great fame throughout all the region, so that his name is still synonymous with "American Doctor" among the people. The many Persian students whom he trained are his best memorial. A new hospital, "The Lillie Reed Holt Memorial," is nearly ready for use. The grounds cover about eight acres on the outskirts of the city, thus securing quiet and a good water supply. It is the only hospital between Teheran and Baghdad, nearly five hundred miles, and its field will embrace all Southwestern Persia.

Dr. Funk reports:

"The work in Hamadan has been that of hospital, dispensary, and visiting patients in their homes. Through these means the reputation and influence of

the physicians of the station have been considerably extended. One patient, a Mollah, on whom we operated for mastoid disease, never ceases to praise us and our work to all his friends and acquaintances. During the winter and spring our ten hospital beds have been in constant use, and more than once patients have had to be put off for lack of room. The new hospital will be most welcome. Six medical students are under instruction."

Much time is spent by Mrs. Blanche Wilson Stead, M. D., and the other ladies of Hamadan Station in tours among the surrounding villages. Mrs. Stead says:

"During the cool weather the whole day is spent attending to the sick, preaching to the crowds, or teaching the one or two who are interested enough to stay and listen. When we reach a village, we send the native helper through the streets with an armful of Scripture portions and tracts to announce that all who will may come and hear God's word and get medicine. The first patients that come are attended to at once. When the company has increased, we spend half an hour or more in reading and explaining passages of Scripture. If there is any disorder, the sick ones are seen as quickly as possible, and all sent away but those who care to listen. Mr. Stead and his helper not only give medicine and advice to the men who need it, but fill the prescriptions for the women also, unless the crowd is too great. No record has been kept of the number receiving medicine, but for women alone about 3000 prescriptions were written."

Dr. Clara Field, who went out in 1906, has already acquired a reputation for surgical work among the women. In her first year's report, she says:

"The month following my arrival I assumed a share of the work with the two medical classes, teaching three hours a week. In the spring I went to Kermanshah with Mr. and Mrs. Hawkes. The sick were brought to us at all our stopping-places. We staid thirteen days in the city, holding clinics in the Mission House, besides visiting many patients. The Governor sent for me to attend his wife, and I had a consultation with her physicians, a Turk, a Jew, and a Persian. One of these spoke only French, one only Persian, the other Persian and French, and I little but English. The situation was amusing, in spite of the occasion.

"My work so far has largely been as consultant to the Persian physicians trained by former missionaries, who are doing commendable work, both medical and evangelistic. For their women patients I have done much that a man would not be permitted to do. We are most thankful that a young Armenian woman

has decided to study medicine. She is a bright, capable girl, and has taught for some time in the Faith Hubbard School. She began her course in nursing this summer."

One poor woman who had suffered for months was in such a hopeless condition that her friends turned her face towards Mecca and sat waiting to see her die. As a last resort, some one suggested sending for the Hakim Khanum (lady doctor). By God's blessing, she was entirely restored, and came, full of gratitude, to return thanks. When her relatives were asked, "Why did you wait so long?" they replied: "We had been taught to fear your medicine; but after this, we shall always come to you."

**Resht** is an important town on the Caspian Sea, where the work is comparatively new. Dr. J. D. Frame took charge of the new Government Hospital here for three months, at the request of the Governor, with the understanding that the arrangement was to continue for five years; but political influence finally put an end to the negotiations. Dr. Frame has a dispensary, and itinerates widely.

At **Kasvin**, half way between Teheran and Resht, the old dispensary has been fitted up for the use of Doctor and Mrs. Lawrence (Dr. Jessie Wilson). Mrs. Lawrence spent much time in Kasvin before her marriage. In addition to her school and visiting work, she holds a religious meeting every week for the dispensary patients. Dr. Lawrence writes:

"Many Armenians come to the dispensary, and send for me to their homes. An automobile was sent recently to take me to Bakandeb, about twenty-five miles out, where the superintendent of the road had been badly hurt in an accident, and the Russian physician wished a consultation. The Russians have a large colony here, and we have found them very friendly."

## MEDICAL WORK IN PERSIA.

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TEHERAN.—Hospitals for men and women ; two dispensaries.

J. G. WISHARD, M. D., MARY J. SMITH, M. D., MISS F. M. BRADFORD,  
nurse.

HAMADAN.—Lillie Reed Holt Memorial Hospital ; dispensary.

J. A. FUNK, M. D., CLARA H. FIELD, M. D., MRS. F. M. STEAD, M. D.

KASVIN.—Dispensary and visiting.

E. T. LAWRENCE, M. D., MRS. LAWRENCE, M. D.

RESHT.—Dispensary and visiting.

J. D. FRAME, M. D.

URUMIA.—Westminster Hospital ; Howard Annex (women) ;  
two dispensaries.

HARRY P. PACKARD, M. D., EMMA T. MILLER, M. D.

TABRIZ.—Whipple Hospital (women) ; two dispensaries.

W. S. VANNEMAN, M. D., MARY BRADFORD, M. D.

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